

If you needed one more reason, if you're eligible to get that booster right away, this would be it.

Those are the words of Dr. Collins.

By now we know, the longer that eligible people resist safe vaccines, the greater the risk of new variants like Delta and Omicron arising in our midst. These strains—these strains—of variants have largely spread among unvaccinated populations, threatening our families, small businesses, and prolonging the day we put this wretched disease fully in the rearview mirror.

So if you aren't getting vaccinated for yourself because you don't think you need it, then do it for your family, your friends, and your neighbors because the unvaccinated population is where the variants multiply, spread, and grow, and hurt everybody.

So as we enter the holiday season, as we begin attending holiday gatherings and traveling long distances to see families, I urge New Yorkers and Americans everywhere to stay safe, get vaccinated, and get boosted. It is the best thing we can do to protect our families, our communities, and our country.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on NDAA, the Defense Act, we begin an important week for what will be an important final month of 2021.

Later today, the Senate will vote on cloture on the substitute amendment to the NDAA. NDAA has been passed by this Chamber for over 60 years, and there is no good reason why this year should be any different.

Before Thanksgiving, the Senate worked in as bipartisan way as it could to lay the groundwork for advancing the Defense bill. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman REED and Ranking Member INHOFE reached an agreement, a bipartisan agreement, on a package of 18 amendments—let me repeat that; 18 amendments, folks—for the Senate to hold rollcall votes on. Nearly half of those amendments were led by a Republican. That would be more amendments to the NDAA receiving rollcall votes than in the last 4 years combined.

We also agreed to the substitute amendment, which included at least 50 amendments, 27 of which were led by a Republican. Senator INHOFE, the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, agreed to this.

In any other time, this would be considered a very fair and generous compromise. Even though every Member didn't get every amendment they wanted, the leadership on both sides would have made sure that cloture was granted.

Unfortunately, Republicans could not accept this agreement before Thanksgiving, but we hope that Republican dysfunction will not be a roadblock to passing this bill and taking care of our troops and their families.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on government funding, as we all know, by the end of this week, both parties must come to an agreement for funding the government and avoiding a needless shutdown.

At the end of September, Democrats and Republicans worked together to keep the government open through December 3, avoiding many of the fights that tainted so many funding debates under the previous administration. After the House takes action this week, the Democratic-led Senate will move forward to make sure the government remains funded after the deadline.

With so many critical issues, the last thing the American people need right now is a government shutdown, and Democrats are going to work this week to make sure we don't have one this time around. It is important to get it done, and we are working to get it done.

BUILD BACK BETTER

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Madam President, on Build Back Better, before the end of the year, the Senate will also work on President Biden's Build Back Better legislation, which momentarily passed the House at the very end of the last work period.

This week, Democrats will continue to meet with the Senate Parliamentarian in order to complete the technical and procedural work required before the bill comes to the floor. Meetings were held over the Thanksgiving week, and we will continue this week and next week as needed.

As I have said repeatedly, once this necessary work is completed with the Parliamentarian, I will bring the President's Build Back Better legislation to the floor so we can pass it as soon as possible and send it to the President's desk. Our goal continues to be to get this done before Christmas.

Build Back Better represents the largest investment in the American people in generations. Under our bill, childcare will be more affordable, pre-K will be more affordable, and raising kids overall will be more affordable for tens of millions of parents.

The bill will take unprecedented steps in the fight against the climate crisis, paving the way for even greater action in the future.

And as scores of economists from across the ideological spectrum attest to, Build Back Better will not worsen inflation—will not worsen inflation—and in the long run help bring costs under control.

So cutting costs, saving parents money, fighting climate change, and creating the jobs of tomorrow—these are the things the American people want; these are the things the American people need; and these are the things that Build Back Better will deliver on once we pass it through this Chamber.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, today's Democratic Party does not make the policy decisions of a party that is serious about protecting our country.

In May, President Biden released a budget proposal that proposed a de facto cut in defense spending, and that was before the President's own supercharged inflation further cut the purchasing power of every defense dollar.

In August, his botched Afghanistan retreat shattered our allies' trust and delighted the terrorists. In 10 months in office, despite naive happy talk from the administration, the threats we face are markedly worse. The vacuum they left in Afghanistan has emboldened terrorists, from Iran's militias in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen to the highest ranks of the Taliban's government.

Their desperation to return to a failed nuclear deal has given Iran the upper hand in negotiations.

For 4 years, my colleague the Democratic leader seemed constantly focused on Putin and Russia. But now, with Putin flaunting his power and Russia engaged in ongoing cyber attacks, weapons tests, and troop buildups? Crickets.

And for all their talk about China's threat, we have seen no evidence that Democrats intend for the United States to keep pace with the PLA's investments in nuclear and hypersonic weapons.

The bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission has made clear that we cannot shortchange our military modernization and have a prayer of competing with the People's Republic of China or even the declining but dangerous Russian Republic.

Our colleagues across the aisle have missed one opportunity after another to right the ship. They have used the reconciliation process to pass trillions in new partisan spending without a cent for defending the Nation.

And despite the strong bipartisan work of our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee, the Democratic leader kept this year's Defense authorization bill in limbo literally for months and now wants to block the Senate from a real debate and a real amendment process.

Debating the right way to confront Russian threats to America and our allies and equip our friends in Ukraine is certainly worth the Senate's time. Putin is massing tens of thousands of troops on Ukraine's border, but the Democratic leader is trying to block a debate about responding to Russian aggression? It makes no sense.

Considering sanctions on the pipeline that fuels Putin's encroachment over Europe—including provisions from Senator Risch that closely mirror language that the House added unanimously—is certainly worth the Senate's time. Setting the record straight on our resolve to maintain a strong and credible nuclear deterrent that can check the worst impulses of our adversaries is also worth the Senate's time.

Yet, once again, the Democratic leader seems to want to put national security last. My colleague is trying to overcorrect for poor planning by cramming a 2-week bill into 2 or 3 days' time. I imagine there might be finger-pointing at the Republicans if that proves impossible.

So nothing less than the safety of the American people is at stake. This is more important than political time-tables or partisan wish lists. So if the Democratic leader insists on forcing a cloture vote later today, I will oppose cutting off these important debates prematurely when they have really just begun.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now on a related matter, why do our Democratic colleagues want to short-change our national defense? Well, to free up their time and attention for another massive, reckless taxing-and-spending spree, a radical wish list that would hurt American families and help China.

Working families are already getting slammed by runaway costs because the Democrats' last massive spending spree drove up inflation. Gas prices are up about 50 percent, used car prices are up more than 25 percent, and grocery prices across practically every category are up significantly over this time last year.

But, in response, Washington Democrats want to print, borrow, and spend trillions more. Even if you accept all their budget gimmicks at face value, this bill alone would unleash \$800 billion in not-paid-for spending in the next 5 years. Years 5 through 10 are when their crushing tax hikes and phony accounting would actually begin to kick in. But even then the bill is not paid for.

President Biden promised Americans over and over that this legislation would cost zero dollars. Obviously, that is false. The Congressional Budget Office says that after 10 years, after their tax hikes and fake offsets are factored in, their spree would still add up to \$367 billion and add that all to the deficit.

President Biden said the deficit impact would be zero. In reality, it is

hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars.

President Biden promised Americans something else too. He said he would never raise taxes on the middle class. People earning less than \$400,000 per year were not to pay a penny more. He has completely broken this promise as well.

Among the \$1.5 trillion in job-killing tax increases are new burdens for small businesses, family farms, and direct hikes on middle-class families earning less than six figures. Meanwhile, amazingly, Democrats did find room in their plan to include \$300 billion in tax cuts for the wealthiest blue-State ZIP codes in New York and California. Our colleagues want to pretend they are launching another New Deal. Yet one of the biggest components is a direct cash giveaway to their richest constituents.

So the cost of this spending spree would be astronomical, and the massive tax hikes that would only partly pay for it would literally crush an already fragile economy.

Well, what about the content of the liberal wish list? If Democrats get to steal the American people's credit card for this historic spending spree, what would our citizens even get to unwrap?

Well, there would be massive government giveaways to supposedly green initiatives, giving rise to a whole new generation of waste and abuse like Solyndra.

There would be a gigantic slush fund so that HHS Secretary Becerra, the culture warrior who sued Catholic nuns, could take over daycare and pre-kindergarten across America. He would be in charge of subsidizing certain kinds of private family choices but not others and tilting the playing field against faith-based childcare.

There would be a continuation of inflationary welfare payments that Washington is sending out with zero work requirements whatsoever, and illegal immigrants would get the money as well. Oh, and, as we speak, Senate Democrats are still trying desperately behind the scenes to get sweeping amnesty included in the bill as well.

So it goes on and on like this, a hodgepodge catalog that is built to satisfy the demands of activists, not the needs of families. If you ask any working-class or middle-class American family for their top concerns, you aren't going to hear many people pinning for massive tax hikes, electric car charging stations, and woke bureaucrats getting control of their kids' early childhoods.

My colleagues across the aisle seem determined to spend the weeks ahead on ways to waste Americans' money while making Americans' problems even worse. So let's hope enough of our Democratic colleagues step back, take stock, do the responsible thing, and kill this bill.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4350, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4350) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2022 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reed/Inhofe modified amendment No. 3867, in the nature of a substitute.

Reed amendment No. 4775 (to amendment No. 3867), to modify effective dates relating to the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration and the Service Acquisition Executive of the Department of the Air Force for Space Systems and Programs.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HUNTER BIDEN

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, today I am going to highlight a new Hunter Biden record that I have recently made public.

Before I get to that point, I am going to take a trip down memory lane—yes, down memory lane.

On September 23, 2020, Senator JOHN-SON and I released our "Biden Report," as it has been called. That report focused on questionable financial transactions between the Biden family and foreign, government-linked individuals.

On November 18, 2020, we released a supplemental to that report. I am going to read several statements from the media and my Democratic colleagues about our report.

So, to start with, on September 23, 2020, a New York Times article by Nicholas Fandos described it in two ways: "lack of meaningful new information" and "overlap with a Russian disinformation campaign."

And the then-Democratic minority leader was quoted in the same article